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Atari Online News, Etc.
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~ Burger King: You Choose ~ Classic Board Games! ~ Google Cuts Temps!

-* Bad Economy Kills CES Pizzaz *-
-* Fake CNN Site E-Mail Hides A Trojan *-
-* Hackers Deface NATO and U.S. Army Web Sites*-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

Well, here we are in the first full week of the new year. There is a lot of anticipation of what this new year will bring to the world. The economy is in the dumper, wars still abound with political and religious zeal, and whatever other ill that you care to consider. We're all hoping that a new president - in the form of Obama - will resolve the many issues facing us these days. If you're one of them, get a reality check! While a new president can begin to put things in the right direction, the world is faced with problems that just cannot be fixed overnight. And many of the problems we're facing took years to evolve; they will take as long to resolve. And the government alone cannot possibly fix everything. So, be prepared for a long road for recovery.

Not much to look forward to, is it? Things are rough right now, and will likely get worse before they get much better. But, as in the past, the world will be looking at the U.S. to be a leader in these tough times, and to help set the pace of improvement. The U.S., in its position of being a world leader, will have to work toward maintaining that high reputation. And Obama, likely wanting to prove that his election was no fluke, will be working even harder to make positive headway. Good luck, because he's going to need it!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
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Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I'm glad you weathered the holidays...
CONGRATULATIONS!

I'm sure that I'm not alone when I say that I was glad to see 2008 in the rear-view mirror. My big worry is whether 2009 will be any better. Something tells me that we don't yet see the full width and breadth of the problems ahead of us. If I were President-Elect Obama, I'd be demanding a recount right about now!

I was having a discussion the other night with an old (conservative) friend and, much to my surprise, we agreed on what we need to do (and what we need to NOT do) to get ourselves out of this mess.

First of all, NO tax cuts. This is not the time to cut the legs out from under the only entity in the world that can dig us out of this mess. No, I'm sorry, the free market is not the answer to this one. The free market, unbridled and unchecked, is what got us into this mess. In a very short amount of time, people are going to NEED assistance. I'm not talking about having to drive the same Lexus for three years instead of two, I'm talking about making mortgage and health care insurance payments. And where should this help come from? Well, that's really the government's main reason for existing... to help and protect its citizens.

But gimmicks like tax rebates (yes, they're a gimmick) aren't the way to go. If you want to make things better, the only REAL way to do it is to cut expenses at the most basic level. Cutting down on local, state and federal levels is a shell game, since services are going to have to be provided eventually. It's a question of how big you want to let that pothole in the road get. Do you want it fixed when it's going to cost a hundred bucks to do, or a thousand?

Perhaps the most important area for everyone is healthcare costs. A healthy adult should not have to spend 15 or 20 hours every week earning money to pay his/her health insurance. Likewise, a business that provides healthcare for its employees should not have to pay more for that healthcare than for the raw materials or services it needs to stay in business. And that's what's happening now.

I don't mean to sound like I think that most of the problem can be laid at the feet of the insurance companies... but I do... along with the auto manufacturers and the banking/investing industries. They've all made the very same mistake. They began to think of their products as only intermediate steps to their 'true' product... their stock offerings.

Chevy and Ford don't gauge their success by who's sold more trucks, they gauge it by who's stock is worth more. The insurance companies don't take pride in who provides the best coverage for the least money, they take pride in which portfolios and mutual funds their stock is included in. And THAT'S what's got to change.

I've always been of the opinion that a worker should be paid well enough to afford whatever it is he or she is making. In other words, if a guy is working on an Escalade assembly line, he should be paid well enough to be able to afford an Escalade.

I admit, though, that I haven't figured out what to do with the guy who runs a toothpick making machine or a chewing gum wrapping machine. Well, I've made MY contribution, now it's your turn. [grin]

The long and short of it is that we've got a lot of work to do and, while there will always be someone waiting to take advantage of a situation, it's not something we should even consider basing an economy on.

After insurance costs, we need to work on energy costs and the huge salaries and bonuses... but first things first.

And this whole idea of whether people use 'incentive' tax rebates or 'stimulus checks' to go out and spend or to reduce their debt, and one being more desirable than the other is all farce as well. If you want the middle class to spend, make it possible to do so without fear of losing their house or healthcare. If you want to stimulate the economy, work toward a situation where people don't have to choose between medication and food.

Well, anyway, what we need to do is create jobs. The government needs to spend its money just like WE need to spend OUR money... carefully, deliberately and wisely. We need to bring costs... governmental, corporate and personal... back into line, we need to pull together and cut out the abuses that have dogged us, we need to get our heads straight about how we got where we are and how we're going to get back to where we want to be.

And even with all the troubles that we're all facing, please, please remember that there's always someone worse-off than you are... and I'll bet you don't have to look around too far to find an example of that. So when you go shopping, pick up an extra can of this or bag of that and drop it off at your local food share or soup kitchen. Donating to your church's food drive is good, but get more involved than that if you can... and involve your kids along with you. You want your kids to look at you like a hero? Let them see you spend a couple hours volunteering. I don't care who you are or who your kids are... if you roll up your sleeves and ask them to do it alongside you, they'll learn lessons that neither of you ever thought of... and you'll BOTH be better for it... and that's not even taking into account the good you'll be doing for someone else!

Well, let's get to the news, hints, tips and info available from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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'Dave' asks for help identifying a cartridge:

"Some time ago I bought a second hand Atari 520STE, and included was a cartridge which I don't know what is for.

Please, could anybody tell me for what is that cartridge for? Many thanks.

Here are some pictures that I took:
<http://fotolog.miarroba.com/f/9/5/0/5826950/1.jpg>
<http://fotolog.miarroba.com/f/9/5/0/5826950/2.jpg>
<http://fotolog.miarroba.com/f/9/5/0/5826950/3.jpg>

The main chip is named HARTD1 87HCI, but I couldn't find any information in Internet about it."

Charles Richmond tells Dave:

"Perhaps if you open the case of the cartridge, it might have a name and address on it. That could help you determine what

it's for."

Ed Edelenbos tells Charles:

"Uhm... woulda been hard to take the pics and get the chip number without taking the case apart."

Our own Dana Jacobson adds:

"Perhaps it's a Blitz cable. The Blitz was used to copy software, including most copyrighted programs."

Ronald Hall posts his guess:

"If that plug fits into an external drive, then I would hazard a guess and say its one of the cartridges that copy protected Floppy disks, like games.

If that's right, you'd still need the software that came with it though.

Can't remember all the names, but Synchro Express comes to mind.

Just a guess though, mind you."

Rodolphe Czuba posts this about absolutely the last batch of CT63s:

"Happy new Year 2009 to all atarians.

A new batch of 20 CT63 may be produced this month and shipping planned for March (no delay this time).

I need 20 buyers and I have 14.

It is the really last batch because of new projects after (CTPCI and an other) and the factory difficulty to solder correctly all parts (I had 7 boards to repair on the previous batch!) because of the lost of the solder mask inox (too expensive to produce again) when the previous factory closed.

You last chance to get a CT63 on your Falcon. Price is still 320 EUR.

www.czuba-tech.com "

'Phantommm' asks about coding for the Falcon030's DSP:

"A friend of mine is interested in programming and wants to do some coding on the Atari Falcons DSP.

He is looking for some simple examples which he can use to get started and build on.

He's interested in doing Graphics/Video, Audio and Communications stuff. And wants to try coding the DSP port to work with different types of hardware, and or build some type of add-on board for experiments with different hardware.

He is wanting to know what programming software would be best for this and needs software examples to get started.

He is just starting out on this and needs beginner info to start out and advanced stuff to keep interested after mastering the beginner stuff.

I'm not sure how to get him started on the best course, so asking for advice and where to find the software and any reading material. Anyone??"

Adan Klobukowski tells Phantomm:

"Ask here: <http://bbs.dhs.nu/coding/> "

Miro Kropacek adds:

"...as Adam pointed out, he can always ask at dhs forum. I've got quite a experiences with DSP coding but I don't want to waste time for writing some general answers to some imaginary person.[grin] Dhs forum is being watched by the well known DSP coders and me."

Phantomm replies:

"Well, he feels that he would be put on a Black List, which could lead to people avoiding him, Job loss, and other bad stuff that comes with the territory. He won't even subscribe to this newsgroup in any form. By the way, he thinks I'm either very Brave or just plain Crazy."

Yvan Doyeux adds:

"I made lot of experiments with DSP on Falcon. DSP Programming is a little bit strange but exciting! (like some registers are not always updated after a command or memory use)

A good thing to start is to read Atari Official Developer Kit Documentation. I don't know an easy way to download it but you can find a scanned version in DjVu format (Page 103):
<http://letotd.free.fr/djvu/doc%20dev%20falcon.zip>

You will find specifications of the DSP 56001 present in the Falcon and important memory map informations.

In addition, you must retrieve exhaustive informations of Motorola DSP 56k family: <http://www.freescale.com/> You will find useful User Manuals.

"[For examples,] French ST Magazine published good DSP courses with examples on disks since issue 81 but only in french.
Disks with C and DSP examples:
<http://stmagazine.org/>

Scans of ST Mag:

<http://www.abandonware-magazines.org/>

These examples with some kind of optimizations are not always very good in my mind.

Next you will try official DSP 56001 Debugger, Dsp Tools and if you need the excellent PureC:
http://dhs.nu/files_code.php

Debugger is a very attractive tool but not always have the same behaviour as the real DSP. You can find other examples in the archive. Dsp Tools is a command line tool not user friendly but do the job."

Phantom replies:

"My friend says to thank you for the information. I think this will help get him started, I also found some simple examples of DSP code for him to experiment with.

If you happen to come across anything you think will help, then do pass it along in e-mail or here."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section    - Classic Board Games Go Virtual!
      "*****"                      EA To Support PlayStation Home Beta!
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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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# Classic Board Games Go Virtual

Pass go - and click. Classic board games like Monopoly are going virtual under a partnership between Electronic Arts and Hasbro as the whole family from children to grandparents become gamers.

Games like "Monopoly Here and Now: World Edition," "Battleship" and "Boggle" have entered the digital world with EA using the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) to showcase upcoming spring releases aimed at the burgeoning casual games market.

A new version of "Scrabble" for PSP and Nintendo DS introduces a Scrabble Slam mode that challenges players to get rid of Slam cards by spelling words.

Those wishing to go green can save paper by playing "Trivial Pursuit" on Wii, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, and PlayStation 2.

After releasing "Hasbro Family Game Night" on Wii and PS2 last fall, EA is offering all of the games on Xbox Live Arcade.

Gamers can buy games individually or the entire suite, which includes "Scrabble," "Connect Four," "Boggle," "Yahtzee," "Battleship," "Sorry!," and "Sorry! Sliders."

But despite the recent influx of board games going digital, Hasbro isn't about to lose its lucrative board game business.

"I don't think you can ever replace the experience of pulling out a box of "Monopoly" and playing in front of the fireplace with your family over the holidays," said Chip Lange, EA Hasbro vice president and general manager.

Instead, Lange foresees video games giving franchises like "Scrabble" and "Yahtzee" new life through online connectivity that allows families to play together from across the country.

The virtual world also opens up new gameplay options like a 30-minute speed game of "Monopoly."

"The cardboard version of "Connect Four" is limited to connecting four checkers in a row, but we can do things like blow up checkers in the digital version and it adds a lot of new strategic gameplay mechanics," said Lange. "These video games keep the brands relevant in the digital age."

Due in large part to Nintendo's successful Wii and Nintendo DS platforms, the game industry has seen an explosion of new players over the past two years.

According to the Entertainment Software Association, 65 percent of American households now play videogames and they are taking up casual games which range from board games to music games like "Rock Band 2" and "Guitar Hero: World Tour."

"Casual games are expanding the market by bringing lapsed gamers back into the market, and families together around the TV," said Geoff Keighley, host of Spike TV's "Game Trailers."

"Casual games are successful when they are easy to understand and pick up and play. So the established Hasbo brands should really help EA's games break through the clutter."

According to a recent study by IGN Entertainment and Ipsos MediaCT, over half of gamers polled were married, 48 percent have kids, and new gamers - those who have started playing videogames in the past two years - are 32 years old on average.

"Today's gamers represent a wide variety of demographic groups: men and women, kids, parents and grandparents, younger and older consumers," said Adam Wright, director of research for Ipsos MediaCT.



"All this underscores the fact that gaming has become a mainstream medium in this country that appeals to people from all walks of life."

But not every platform has been a smash success.

EA received a backlash from Facebook users last year when the popular but unlicensed "Scrabulous" game was forcibly replaced by EA's official "Scrabble" game, which launched with far less depth than its popular predecessor. Lange said changes have been made.

"We listened to the gamers and a lot of the later developments in the game like being able to type in your letters and being able to turn off the animations for slower PCs all came from the message boards," said Lange.

"I think people have realized that the video game market has grown from being just a series of core holiday blockbusters to being a global male/female interactive platform for all ages."

#### EA Announces Support for PlayStationHome Beta

Electronic Arts Inc. announced its initial plans for the PlayStation Home Beta for the PlayStation3 computer entertainment system, the 3D social gaming community that allows users to interact, communicate and share gaming experiences online. EA's support of the PlayStation Home Beta will begin with the EA Sports Complex, which is currently in development and is slated to launch this Spring.

"We're proud to support the PlayStation Home Beta with a very robust offering from EA Sports," said Peter Moore, president of EA Sports. "As part of our continued commitment to the connected experience and the digitization of our business, the EA Sports Complex is a rich new online environment that presents a compelling and immersive social gaming experience for the global Sports audience."

EA worked closely together with Sony Computer Entertainment to ensure that the EA Sports Complex space within PlayStation Home would be a compelling experience for all EA Sports fans, with a space designed for both casual and hardcore gamers. Gamers will be able to play exclusive new EA Sports multiplayer games, meet and interact with EA Sports fans, view daily, weekly and annual leaderboards to see how they compare against the rest of EA Sports Nation, as well as watch trailers and other content from some of their favorite EA Sports games.

EA is currently working with Sony Computer Entertainment on further label support of PlayStation Home Beta, and will announce plans in the near future.

EA Sports is the leading interactive Sports software brand in the world, with top-selling titles and franchises including Madden NFL football, FIFA Soccer, NHL hockey, NBA LIVE basketball, NCAA Football, Tiger Woods PGA Tour and NASCAR racing.

A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Apple's Jobs Reassures Investors About His Health

Apple Inc Chief Executive Steve Jobs sought to soothe investor concerns about his health on Monday, saying his weight loss was caused by a hormone imbalance that is relatively simple to treat.

Shares of Apple rose more than 3 percent in early trade, as Jobs, a pancreatic cancer survivor, said he would remain CEO during his recovery and that his doctors expect him to regain his weight by late spring.

"I will be the first one to step up and tell our Board of Directors if I can no longer continue to fulfill my duties as Apple's CEO," Jobs said in a statement, breaking his silence about his health for the first time in months.

The statement followed widespread investor concern about the executive's health, after Jobs decided not to give the keynote speech at Apple product showcase Macworld this week. Speculation about his health started in June 2008, when Jobs appeared markedly thinner at an Apple event.

Jobs is seen as the driver of Apple's successful products, including Macintosh computers, iPod media players and iPhones.

He acknowledged he had been losing weight throughout 2008 and that his doctors determined "a hormone imbalance that has been 'robbing' me of the proteins my body needs to be healthy."

He said the remedy for "this nutritional problem is relatively simple and straightforward" and that he has begun treatment.

Investors who had been unnerved by Jobs's gaunt appearance last year, and the lack of a clear explanation from the company, heaved a sigh of relief.

"I think it does put to rest all the speculation on his health and I think people will now start to focus on the business," said ThinkEquity LLC analyst Vijay Rakesh. "I think obviously this is very good for Apple and the stock because Jobs has been an innovator. He steered the company into a lot of new products."

Apple's board said in a separate statement that Jobs has its full support during his recuperation.

Jobs said the cause of his weight loss had been a mystery to himself and his doctors until he decided a few weeks ago that getting to the root of the problem was his top priority.

Shares of Apple rose 3.2 percent to \$93.64 in morning trade on the Nasdaq. But the stock remains far below its 12-month high of \$192.24, hit in May 2008, amid concerns about how the slump in consumer spending will hurt sales of the company's high-end products.

Adam Harter, an analyst at Financial Enhancement Group, said his company added to its position in Apple a couple of months ago, when the stock was trading in the mid-\$80s.

"At that point of time we felt the Steve Jobs' premium was already backed out of the stock price. So anything that says he's not in bad health is good news and this appears to say he's in much better health than the market had anticipated so the upside can be significant," Harter said.

### Future of Macworld Expo Up in the Air

Macworld Expo will go on in 2010 without Apple's participation, but what will it look like? And will anybody show up?

We might get an idea this evening, when IDG World Expo plans to hold a town-hall style meeting open to Macworld attendees to solicit ideas for the future of the show. Apple stunned IDG in December with its decision to pull out of the show completely. They also pulled CEO Steve Jobs from his usual starring role and had Phil Schiller deliver what was widely considered one of Apple's most lackluster Macworld keynotes in years.

A handful of conference goers interviewed following Tuesday's final keynote address from Apple cautiously endorsed the idea of an Apple-less Macworld, but said a lot would depend on how the show itself is constructed.

Northern California resident Peter Speros, a cable technician in San Bruno, figured he would definitely stop by next year's show, since it's basically in his backyard. Speros has attended several Macworld Expos in order to get tips and information regarding his photography hobby, not so much for the Apple experience itself. Still, "it will be a shame not having Apple," he said.

Macworld has always been about more than Apple to a certain degree: it's a gathering place for the famously tight Mac community to swap stories, ideas, and have fun, said Sterett Prevost, leader of the Tuscon, Arizona Mac users group. "I go to Macworld Expo for the Mac community, rather than Apple," he said.

But if Apple isn't there to bankroll Macworld - the company is estimated to spend \$25 million on the show and its booth is easily four times the size of any other - will there still be a place for the community to go? Lili Hampel, who came all the way to San Francisco from Melbourne, Australia for Macworld 2009, isn't so sure.

"It's different without Apple; it would be a big difference," she said. Her partner, Les Posen, gives technical presentations on Apple's Keynote software during Macworld, and their attendance at future events would depend at least in part on whether or not the instructional sessions that are a big part of Macworld would continue.

Still, "we come here to meet people," Hampel said.

That means if IDG can find a way to keep Macworld profitable without Apple's contributions, there might be a way to keep a small core group

of Mac loyalists coming to San Francisco each January for Macworld. Macworld 2011 will probably have to be in something much smaller than the cavernous Moscone Center, which might bring the community closer together but which would likely doom the show's chances of remaining a must-see destination on the technology media calendar.

### USB 3.0 Promises Faster Speeds, Backward Compatibility

Nearly a decade after USB 2.0 was first introduced, this practically ubiquitous technology is poised for its first major upgrade in years. Symwave, a semiconductor startup, and hard-drive maker Seagate are showing the first working demonstration of SuperSpeed - otherwise known as USB 3.0 - here at CES 2009. The company's demo setup includes an adaptation of an external Seagate FreeAgent hard drive equipped with the new interface, and shows the high read/write throughput and streaming video performance potential of USB 3.0.

Solid operating-system drivers and mature chip sets helped USB 2.0 evolve into a formidable and dominant interconnection technology for attaching devices to your system. However, in our increasingly high-definition world - a world where many households as well as businesses are verging on the use of terabytes of data, not just gigabytes - the case for greater bandwidth is clear.

Enter USB 3.0, which promises faster speeds and backward compatibility with the 10 billion USB devices shipped to date.

Early in 2008, Symwave began work on a USB 3.0 physical-layer device, the new cable that will be able to transport the format's higher bandwidth, in anticipation of the spec being completed by late last year. When the spec went to its first public 1.0 release at the SuperSpeed USB Developers Conference last November, Symwave was the only company ready with a proof-of-concept product.

According to Symwave, the new cable dramatically improves throughput speed - even now, in its early development stages. Where USB 2.0 offers speeds of 480 megabits per second, USB 3.0 jumps to a theoretical 5 gigabits per second. "In our simulations, we're seeing in the neighborhood of six to seven times the throughput, at least 150 megabytes per second [equivalent to 1.2 gigabits]. The theoretical improvement is 10 times," says Craig Stein, vice president of engineering. "We think that, over time, as more software optimization is done, we'll get closer to the theoretical improvement. We think somewhere near 250-300 megabytes per second [or up to 2.4 gigabits per second] is where USB 3.0 will top out when it matures."

Stein says the company's target is to enable peripheral devices with USB 3.0 to roll out in time for the 2009 Christmas shopping season. Even if PC adoption of USB 3.0 lags, he adds, "we think there's opportunity for consumers to futureproof the products they buy."

According to the spec, USB 2.0 cables and devices will be backward-compatible with the new USB 3.0 port. The cable, the host device (for example, the PC), and the peripheral device all must be USB 3.0 capable to achieve the 3.0 speeds; otherwise, the connector drops down to the lowest common denominator, USB 2.0 speeds.

While USB 3.0 will have to challenge External Serial ATA (eSATA) as a connector on storage devices, Stein sees USB 3.0's future as going beyond storage. "SATA is intended for storage only, whereas we believe 3.0 will, over time, become dominant in consumer electronics devices. We believe history is a good indication of future results. 2.7 billion USB ports shipped in 2007."

One appeal of USB 3.0 over USB 2.0 for consumer electronics: The port can more efficiently handle power. "In 3.0, the power budget is up by 1.5 times that of USB 2.0. We believe that 3.0 will have a wider appeal to consumer electronics in that it offers greater flexibility in powering [devices]." The improved pin configuration of USB 3.0 could allow for a device to charge faster, for example.

Seagate's Jon van Bronkhorst, executive director of branded solutions, notes there are still "battles to be had: USB 3.0 or eSATA. Dual-USB or eSATA." eSATA does not include power, he adds, but if you piggyback eSATA into a combo USB/eSATA port, as some notebooks are showing now, you can use USB power pins and eSATA data pins. Van Bronkhorst thinks that a USB 3.0 product remains "about a year, maybe more," into the future.

#### Microsoft: Windows 7 Not A Lock for '09

It's not clear whether Microsoft is just trying to be overly cautious, but top Windows executive Bill Veghte said the company is telling PC makers that Windows 7 might or might not be ready in time for this year's holiday season.

"I'm telling them that it could go either way," Veghte told CNET News in an interview Wednesday. "We will ship it when the quality is right, and earlier is always better, but not at the cost of ecosystem support and not at the cost of quality."

Veghte also said that the economy is factoring into his marketing plans for Windows, which is in the middle of an advertising push initially estimated at several hundred million dollars over several years.

"Given the economic situation, as shareholders would expect us to tighten our belt, but with the things that are most important, and customers would expect us to do that while continuing to innovate," he said. "The expectation is that the dollar we spend on advertising today will go further than it did in July...and the Windows business is pretty core to Microsoft, it's core to the Microsoft brand, so we will continue to invest in support of Windows."

Asked whether he thought the same applied to the unit's staffing level, he said Windows is core to the success of the company," but added that he's "certainly looking at how we can be more efficient, and given the mission in our advertising spending that we just talked about, efficient in where we apply our headcount and efficient, but not at the risk of jeopardizing the opportunity that we have."

#### BenQ's Netbook Comes to America

Looks like BenQ is taking cues from Samsung. Shortly after Samsung introduced a slew of laptops for sale in the United States, BenQ - known for projectors, HDTVs, and optical drives - announced that its netbook is coming to America as well.

The Joybook U101 was announced this morning at CES 2009, bringing with it the usual netbook fare - a 10-inch screen, an undersized keyboard, and the Intel Atom platform - and to its credit, some slight twists.

At 2.2 pounds, the U101 is one of the lightest 10-inch netbooks in the market. The Acer Aspire One, which also tips the scales at 2.2 pounds, has an 8.9-inch screen, while 10-inchers like the HP Mini 1000 and the MSI Wind typically come in at 2.6 pounds. The different colors offered have wacky naming schemes, including Sapphire Blue, Shimmery Black, Pearly White, and Rosy Pink. But the slight twist is that U101 embeds Emoticons' combination of symbols and letters made popular by AOL's Instant Messenger service in the design. You might even run across one that says "I 'heart' Joybook Lite."

The U101 has some interesting features, one of them a dual hard drive configuration: It integrates both a solid state drive and a spinning one. MSI has already announced something similar, and others are sure to follow. The SSD drive can range between 8 and 32 GB while the spinning drive tops out at 160 GB. The HP 1000 and the Acer One are already bundling 3G wireless into their netbooks; the U101 follows suit with embedded HSUPA 3G wireless. Bluetooth and WiFi are also available.

The rest of the features should sound familiar, including a 1.3 megapixel webcam, 1.5 Watt speakers, headphone and microphone jacks, and three USB ports. Like every other netbook, the U101 runs on the Intel Atom processor, 1 GB of memory, and Intel integrated graphics. The U101 will carry a 3-cell battery for now, which means you'll get less than 3 hours of battery life. BenQ plans to ship a 6-cell battery at a later date. Interestingly enough, Linux (no word on which version yet) is the operating system of choice for now, with Windows XP Home surely to follow.

Before you get too excited, the Joybook U101 will not be available until later this year, most likely during the spring of 2009. No word yet on pricing.

#### Bad Economy Takes Pizzazz Out of CES

Vast, empty spaces in the middle of the show floor. Knots of uniformed salespeople standing idly next to flickering screens. A slow-moving crowd drifting from one display to the next.

Can this really be the much-touted Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, the premier global technology showcase that in years past has been described as a war zone, a zoo, an unrivaled extravaganza?

"There seems to be less buzz," said Susan Boyce, an executive with a major U.S. software developer. "This is the big day, I would have thought."

"I've had other times when there are so many people it's hard to walk

around."

Not so at midday on Thursday, typically the peak period for a show that 130,000 people registered to attend this year.

It's no surprise the show has lost some of its luster with the global economy deteriorating, the U.S. in deep recession and consumer spending on electronics forecast by the Consumer Electronics Association to slip 0.6 percent in 2009.

Sales promoters on the show floor were beseeching bystanders to come into their booths, and public relations personnel camped near the entryway to try to entice visitors.

At the junctions of the Microsoft Corp, Motorola Inc and Intel Corp booths - arguably the biggest concentration of global tech names - promoters in black-and-white sweaters talked to each other.

"It's a very sobering and conservative reaction to the economy," said Tom Dixon, vice president of marketing at DTS, which crafts digital sound standards and whose ubiquitous logo graces everything from cinema banners to DVD packaging.

"We're a strong industry, but we're very responsible, too."

Gone was the ear-splitting rock music and most of the models in neon mini-skirts, though inevitably a few were around the halls.

To be sure, celebrities were in attendance. Oscar-winning Tom Hanks, R&B crooner Usher and baseball Hall of Famer Reggie Jackson attended a keynote speech by Sony Corp Chief Executive Howard Stringer, the event with the highest star-wattage.

But even they failed to drum excitement into the annual show, which is usually a feast of eye-catching technology for consumers and retailers, from 150-inch giant TV screens to auditorium-sized sound systems.

"Last time? It wasn't like this," said Sergio Garcia of USA Color Minilab, a buyer and second-time CES attendee.

This year, manufacturers went smaller, not just in their presentation but also in their product. Sony debuted the world's lightest 8-inch notebook computer, Samsung Electronics Co Ltd touted 1-inch thick, energy-efficient screens, and LG Electronics Inc demonstrated a Bond-style watch that doubled as a mobile phone.

Sharif Hagazy, a buyer for solar power tech firm ECOSOL, said he noticed the same scaling-back at other trade shows. "It's been like this the past six months," he said.

Sales pitches have also changed. Where corporations before touted the best and most expensive gadgets, many were now extolling the power-saving features of their newest products.

DTS, which in 2008 wowed audiences with a \$200,000, state-of-the-art sound system in a 50 feet-by-60-feet hall, this year drew visitors into a sound-proof, living-room sized space and showed off a system that could go for as low as \$5,000.

"About time," muttered one veteran show-attendee at the back of the demo

room.

## 'Green' Tag Should Be Banished

Green fatigue is now pervasive.

Numerous environment-theme blogs and news sites over the past week have pointed to a statement put out by Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., calling for the demise of all "green" labeling.

Since 1975, the university has been taking nominations for words that need to be banned. The top vote getters for 2008 were "green" and "going green." Also on the black list were the terms carbon footprint and carbon offset.

One word-banning nominator, Ed Hardiman from Bristow, Va., summed up his lack of patience nicely: "If I see one more corporation declare itself 'green,' I'm going to start burning tires in my backyard."

Web site TreeHugger declares that the term green is "barely hanging on," while Willie Brent at his Mr. Cleantech blog speculates that many media companies will need to rethink their naming.

As a person who helped name the CNET Green Tech blog, I suppose I have something to answer for here.

And clearly, there are some real abuses. TreeHugger points to how the concrete industry - source of one of the most polluting industrial processes - has tried to paint itself green and sustainable.

Aggressive green marketing - also known as greenwashing - isn't very helpful to consumers who actually care about making environmentally conscious buying decisions.

But the answer isn't to ban the word green. Consumers simply need to be as savvy as they can and seek out as much information they can. Businesses should also get used to disclosing more - those with less to hide come out looking better.

Greenpeace puts out an electronics guide every year in which it drills down into a number of factors - use of toxics, recycling, carbon emissions, and corporate disclosures.

The same should hold true in other product categories - the more detail, the better. And this is where standards and certifications like Energy Star can really help.

For this to work, journalists and Web writers need to be as specific as possible in the terms they use, and try to give an environmental profile of different technologies.

After all, things aren't often black-and-white. There are many shades to being green.



A new e-mail that is circulating looks like it comes from CNN and links to a fake CNN Web page offering "graphic" video related to the Israel-Hamas conflict but instead hosts a Trojan that steals sensitive data, RSA said on Thursday.

When someone clicks on the video link on the fake CNN site an error message pops up urging the visitor to download the latest version of Adobe Flash Player. Clicking on the download link installs an "SSL stealer" Trojan that captures financial and other sensitive information, RSA said in a blog.

The Trojan looks for encrypted communications between the computer and known financial institutions and when it sees data being sent it diverts it to a malicious third-party, said Sam Curry, vice president of product management and strategy at RSA.

The social-engineering attack is different in that the e-mail pretends to come from a media company and then tries to steal financial data, he said. "Normally when you get phished they send you an e-mail pretending to be from a bank or other financial institution," he said.

RSA discovered the attack early on Wednesday and has worked with others to get the fake site shut down. At a peak on Thursday as many as 80,000 of the phishing e-mails were being sent out, according to Curry.

#### Hackers Deface NATO, US Army Web Sites

Hackers have taken down two high-profile targets as they continue their ongoing Web attacks in support of Palestine, defacing Web sites run by the U.S. Army and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The attacks on Thursday took down the Web sites for The United States Army Military District of Washington and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, according to Zone-H, a Web site that tracks defacement activity.

The NATO site is now back online, but the U.S. Army site was still offline Friday morning. A version of the Web page cached by Google reads: "Stop attacks u israel and usa ! you cursed nations ! one day muslims will clean the world from you ! " NATO didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Most other U.S. Army sites do not appear to have been affected by that attack. The U.S. Army Military District of Washington is an army command, based in Fort Lesley J. McNair in Washington, D.C.

Using what's known as a SQL injection attack, the group also defaced the Web site of the Joint Force Headquarters of the National Capital Region, which handles military incident response for the Washington, D.C., area, according to Gary Warner, director of research in computer forensics with the University of Alabama at Birmingham. A U.S. Army spokeswoman was unable to immediately comment on reports of the hacks.

All of these attacks are credited to a Turkish hacking group called Agd\_Scorp / Peace Crew.

This group has claimed many Web hacks over the past few months,

including Microsoft's Web sites in Canada, Ireland and China; Shell; Harvard University; and the U.S. National Basketball Association, Warner said in a blog posting.

"Although the group is now calling themselves 'Peace Crew,' the same membership was calling itself 'Terrorist Crew' as recently as December," Warner wrote.

As tensions in Gaza have intensified over the past few weeks, loosely organized hacking groups from countries such as Morocco, Turkey and Iran have defaced thousands of Web pages. This latest wave of attacks has mostly focused on Israeli sites, particularly easy targets belonging to individuals or small businesses. However, some high-profile targets have been hit too, such as news site Ynetnews.com.

### Phishing Scam Targets Twitter

Micro-blogging site Twitter was the victim of a phishing scam over the weekend that took control of users' direct messaging capabilities.

Scammers have been taking control of users' accounts and sending direct messages to their followers. These messages include links to what looks like the Twitter sign-in page, but is actually a phishing site that will steal account information once a user has signed in, then add the user to the list of accounts being used to extend the phishing scheme.

"The email says something like, 'hey! check out this funny blog about you...' and provides a link. That link redirects to a site masquerading as the Twitter front page," according to a Saturday blog post from Twitter.

"If you receive a direct message or a direct message email notification that redirects to what looks like Twitter.com - don't sign in," Twitter said. "Look closely at the URL because it could be a scam."

Fraudulent URLs include twitter.access-logins.com rather than twitter.com, according to the company.

For those who have signed into the fake site, Twitter said it will "proactively reset the passwords" of those affected. As a result, some people may not be able to sign in to their accounts, so Twitter asks that you use its "reset password link" so the company can e-mail a new password.

Earlier this year, Twitter was plagued by fake Twitter users whose only updates were spam or virus links. As a result, the site announced in October that it was looking for a systems engineer to handle spam-related issues.

### Google Cuts Temporary Workers But Murky on Details

Google Inc. has jettisoned a substantial number of temporary workers in a recent austerity drive spurred by the recession, although the Internet search leader still intends to spend billions of dollars during the next

two years on product research, development and acquisitions.

The spending plans were outlined in a regulatory filing that also provided some clues about the magnitude of a recent payroll purge targeting Google's legion of contractors and other workers who aren't considered full-time or part-time employees.

The filing to the Securities and Exchange Commission was submitted on Dec. 15, but it was made on paper, leaving it unavailable through the various Web services that track reports to the agency. The Associated Press obtained a copy of the records this week.

A key section of the filing is being kept confidential because Google maintains it contains trade secrets, but the publicly accessible parts provide some information that hadn't previously been disclosed.

For instance, Google revealed it currently has 24,400 employees, including 4,300 interns, temporary workers and contractors. That contrasts sharply with the roughly 10,000 contractors that Google co-founder Sergey Brin said the company had in October. "It's really high," Brin said in an Oct. 16 interview with the San Jose Mercury News.

Google acknowledged in late November that it planned to significantly reduce the number of its contractors and retain all of its full-time employees.

But the company wouldn't specify how many of the temporary workers were being dumped, feeding rampant speculation among bloggers and even industry analysts. Published estimates of the cost-cutting's impact ranged from a few hundred to all 10,000 of Google's contractors.

The SEC filing won't resolve the mystery either. The 4,300 temporary workers mentioned in those documents represent a "subset" of the 10,000 contractors that Brin cited in October, so it would be incorrect to conclude the difference between the two figures reflects the total number of people cut by Google, spokeswoman Jane Penner said Wednesday. Penner would not specify how many contractors Google has eliminated.

The disclosures were made in an application seeking an exemption from rules that would regulate Google as a mutual fund if its investment activities diversify too far beyond government securities and other relatively low-yielding instruments such as money market accounts.

The Mountain View, Calif.-based company has been seeking the waiver since July 2006, hoping to reap higher returns from its \$14.4 billion in cash and marketable securities.

Google also wants the exemption so it can be on more equal footing with rivals like Microsoft Corp. and Yahoo Inc. Microsoft, with about \$21 billion in cash and short-term investments, received a waiver in 1988. Yahoo, with \$3.2 billion in cash and marketable securities, has had the exemption since 2000.

A company can fall under the mutual fund regulations once its investments exceed 40 percent of its assets. Google's investment securities represented 28 percent of its assets as of Sept. 30, but the company believes it could surpass the 40 percent threshold if it ventures into more lucrative options such as municipal bonds.

Although the company's revenue is still rising, Google's growth has been

decelerating. The recession has caused consumers to shop less frequently on the Internet and advertisers have trimmed their marketing budgets. Those factors have slowed the money flowing to Google because online ads generate virtually all the company's revenue, which is expected to total about \$20 billion in 2008.

To help shore up profits, Google's management has curbed some of the generous employee perquisites that have been a company hallmark for the past decade. It has closed some company cafeterias that serve free meals and last month withheld a \$1,000 holiday gift that's traditionally distributed to all employees. Instead, the company handed out free cell phones that run on Google software - a gift that management valued at about \$400.

But Google doesn't plan to scrimp on research and development or acquisitions.

In the SEC filing, the company said it expects to devote roughly 18 percent of its annual expenses to research and development during each of the next two years. That's roughly the same percentage as the past four quarters, when its expenditures in the category totaled \$2.7 billion.

Google also said it expects to buy other companies at a pace consistent with the past two years, when \$4.2 billion in cash went toward acquisitions. Google's \$3.2 billion acquisition of online ad service DoubleClick Inc., completed in March, accounted for most of that amount.

"Given the consolidation occurring in the online advertising industry, it is reasonable to expect that Google may in the future spend considerably more to acquire companies in this sector," the company wrote in the SEC filing.

Antitrust regulators, though, probably would take a hard look if Google tries to buy another Internet ad service. The U.S. Department of Justice already unraveled a proposed partnership that would have enabled Google to sell ads for Yahoo, which runs the second-largest search advertising network. Google backed out of the alliance in November to avoid a legal battle with the government.

Google is under greater pressure to boost its profits coming off a year in which its stock price plunged by about 55 percent.

Although it started to seek more freedom to invest its money well before the recession, gaining more flexibility this year could provide Google with another way to make more money. The recession has eroded the returns on U.S. Treasury notes and bonds as interest rates have fallen in recent months.

In the last four quarters ending Sept. 30, Google said it earned \$415 million from its investments, accounting for about 8 percent of its total profit of \$4.7 billion during that period. In calendar 2007, Google earned \$452 million from its investments, generating nearly 11 percent of its income.

"It is ... critical that Google have the ability to maximize its available resources to remain competitive in its industry," the filing said.

The SEC hasn't set a timetable for ruling on Google's exemption application, according to agency spokesman John Heine.

## Burger King Asks You to Choose: Friends or Food?

Burger King has had some pretty outlandish ad campaigns - most recently with the "Whopper Virgins" TV ads - but a new marketing scheme that utilizes Facebook is possibly its strangest yet. Burger King is asking people to drop ten friends on Facebook to receive a free whopper.

The Whopper Sacrifice Facebook app will let you print out a coupon good for one free whopper - after you drop ten of your friends. Normally, when someone drops a friend on Facebook it is done discretely, but Whopper Sacrifice handles it differently. The act is published in your news feed, saying "Scott sacrificed Becky Lowell for a free whopper."

Cruel? Perhaps.

Ridiculous? Definitely.

Effective? Hard to say.

A lot of people will probably drop the ten friends to get the whopper, but there is nothing stopping them from adding the friends back once they get a coupon. More than 50,000 people have already sacrificed friends for whoppers, so the app is getting attention. But most of all it seems that Burger King just wants the attention so people take notice of its bizarre advertising techniques, and on that end the Whopper Sacrifice is a rousing success.

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